

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /004 R

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APPROVED BY: ARA:RBBENTLEY

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY BRASILIA IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 040127

FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY ROGERS

FOLLOWING IS REPEAT BUENOS AIRES 1103, SENT SECSTATE 18 FEB
76:

QUOTE C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 1103

E.O. 11652: GDS

SUBJECT: GOA MOVES AGAINST PRESS

1. LATE FRIDAY EVENING (FEB. 13) GOA MOVED TO CLOSE
INFLUENTIAL DAILY, LA OPINION. IN DECREE ISSUED CLOSING
PAPER FOR 10 DAYS, GOA CHARGED THAT PAPER HAD "DISTORTED THE
NEWS AND CONTRIBUTED TO A CLIMATE OF INSTABILITY IN THE
COUNTRY."

2. DESPITE FACT THAT LA OPINION HAS LONG BEEN AT ODDS WITH
GOVT AND HAS SEVERAL TIMES IN PAST COME CLOSE TO BEING CLOSED
DOWN, TIMING OF GOVT CLOSURE ORDER CAUGHT MOST OBSERVERS,
INCLUDING THOSE AT LA OPINION, BY SURPRISE. IN RECENT WEEKS,
PAPER HAS CONTINUED ITS EXPOSES OF GOVT CORRUPTION AND HAS
CHARGED THE ADMINISTRATION WITH GROSS POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC
MISMANAGEMENT. HOWEVER, TWO ARTICLES WHICH, FROM GOVT POINT
OF VIEW REQUIRED PAPER TO BE CLOSED, WERE PUBLISHED IN THURS.
EDITION: FIRST ARTICLE CLAIMED THAT MRS. PERON HAD RECENTLY
CALLED IN UNION LEADERS CASILDO HERRERAS AND LORENZO MIGUEL
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AND GIVEN THEM LEATHER BOUND COPIES OF DOSSIERS THAT DOCUMENTED

IN DETAIL THEIR FINANCIAL, SEXUAL AND POLITICAL MISDEEDS. ACCORDING TO ARTICLE THEY RETURNED THE FAVOR TO HER LAST WEEK. SECOND PIECE, A FRONT PAGE EDITORIAL, NOTED THAT THE "CLIQUE" AROUND MRS. PERON CONTINUED TO PLAY PETTY POLITICS WITH COUNTRY'S FUTURE WHILE MILITARY MEN TAKING RESPONSIBLE POLITICAL POSITIONS AND DYING AT THE HANDS OF GUERILLA TERRORISTS.

3. IN FURTHER MOVE AGAINST PRESS, GOVT ON FEB. 16 ENDED POPULAR AND CONTROVERSIAL TALK SHOW, TIEMPO NUEVO, HOSTED BY WELL KNOWN ARGENTINE NEWSMAN, BERNARDO NEUSTADT. THE PROGRAM IN RECENT MONTHS HAS BEEN VIRTUALLY ONLY TV PROGRAM WHICH HAS DEALT WITH CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES FACING COUNTRY IN SERIOUS MANNER.

4. COMMENT: BOTH ACTS ARE SEEN BY POLITICAL OBSERVERS AS DESPERATION MOVES ON PART OF GOVT THAT SEES ITSELF BESET ON ALL SIDES WITH ENEMIES BOTH REAL AND IMAGINED. ATTACK ON PRESS WILL IN FACT ONLY GARNER FURTHER ILL WILL FOR GOVERNMENT. HILL UNQUOTE. INGERSOLL

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, CORRUPTION, INFORMATION CONTROL, PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION, POLITICAL SITUATION, ALLEGATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 19 FEB 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: buchant0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976STATE040127
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: ARA:RBBENTLEY
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760062-1034
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760233/aaaabcuv.tel
Line Count: 81
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: buchant0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 07 JUL 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <07 JUL 2004 by KelleyW0>; APPROVED <26 OCT 2004 by buchant0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: GOA MOVES AGAINST PRESS
TAGS: PINT, AR, LA OPINION
To: BRASILIA
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006